



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

# CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped A Tool Kit



This toolkit provides messages related to the National Tracking Network. We strongly encourage you to use tool kit components as guides, substituting your own local and regional level messaging and data whenever possible.

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# Goals and Guiding Principles



In today's world, we are exposed to between 3,500 and 5,000 messages a day. From TV ads to news stories, and tweets to Web sites, there's a fierce competition for our attention—and our response. As public health professionals, you have a uniquely valuable message to communicate, that often pertains to keeping people healthy and saving lives.

Whether communicating with citizens, other public health professionals, or policymakers, the following steps can help your organization cut through the clutter and be heard:

1.

## **Know your audience**

Different audiences require different messages and methods of delivery. Identify your audience, understand what's important to them, and identify what barriers may keep them from action. Then say what you need to say in a way that connects your ideas to that specific audience's needs or wants.



2.

## **Say it simply**

Use plain language, explain technical terms, and be brief. Regardless of profession or background, we all appreciate straightforward, efficient explanations.



3.

## **Say it often**

Advertising studies suggest that a person needs to be exposed to a message three to five times to receive the full effect of the message. Choose the mediums, such as social media, websites, interviews and articles, that your audience uses to communicate, and reinforce your messages often.



4.

## **Touch the heart**

Tell stories that people connect with on an emotional level and underscore that story with data that show the larger perspective. Use personal or local stories to illustrate the big picture.



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# Goals and Guiding Principles



This tool kit was developed as a resource for your organization, with messages that are intended to resonate with either certain demographics or your audiences overall.

**This toolkit** can be used to help meet the communication goals set by CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network).

## Tracking Network Communication Goals

- Educate about the existence of the Tracking Network and how it can be used to show the connections between health and the environment.
- Demonstrate the effect that Tracking Network findings can have on specific environmental public health issues (for example, heart health and exposure to air pollution).
- Encourage partners, stakeholders, and other organizations to access information from and participate in the Tracking Network and help them recognize it as a valuable tool and good investment.

## Audiences

This tool kit was developed as a resource for your organization, with messages that are intended to resonate with either certain demographics or your audiences overall. These audiences include:

- **State and local public and environmental health practitioners:** This group will benefit from general awareness of the Tracking Network and exposure to success stories and specific examples of how data are being used. Encourage them to not only use existing and new Tracking Network services but also advocate use of the program among peer groups.
- **Decision makers:** This group could include city, county, or state health department leadership or elected officials. These are people who might need information for making resource decisions and potential legislative or policy-making opportunities. They are a critical audience for the Tracking Program. Try to provide them with an overall understanding of the functions of the Tracking Network and examples of practical applications of its data. These examples can show how the Tracking Network has proven valuable to cities, states and regions.
- **Interested public:** This group will likely include persons who look to your organization for health or environment-specific information and discover the Tracking Network via that search. They will benefit most from exposure to specific articles and health-specific information that show the connection between a particular health condition and the environment. Because traditional media channels such as television, radio, and newspapers are important information resources for this group, they will benefit from your organization's active engagement with, and response to, media coverage that relates to health and the environment.

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# Goals and Guiding Principles



## How to Use Tool Kit Components

**Decade of Tracking** This piece is a straightforward story of the Tracking Network. It uses the simple structure of “Before and After Tracking” to explain the effect the Tracking Network has had.

**Ideas for use:** Use this item as an introductory piece that tells the story of tracking. Include it as a link, borrow from it when developing presentations, and use it when informing colleagues about available resources, interviews, and materials.

**Timeline:** This piece serves as a visual demonstration of how the Tracking Network (and its parent, the Tracking Program) began and has evolved.

**Ideas for use:** Use when creating briefings, as background for presentations, and as a resource for interviews and material development.

**Key Messages and Talking Points:** The key messages and talking points have been written to support you and your spokespersons as you address the critical role the Tracking Network has played in addressing environmental and public health issues. These messages may be used as is or can be customized and incorporated into your own messaging. We encourage you to use local-, regional-, or state-specific data whenever possible; using these data will further underscore the importance of this resource for your constituents.

**Ideas for use include:** Incorporate these messages into talking points for presentations, speeches, media interviews and copy for materials.

**The Facts:** This fact sheet was developed to provide you with health- and environment-specific information that can be used to coincide with awareness events and more. For example, the Heart Health and the Air Pollution fact sheet contains information that relates specifically to American Heart Month as well as general statistics about heart health and air pollution.

**Ideas for use:** Incorporate these facts into your outreach via speeches, emails, Web site content, material development, and social media channels. Provide the fact sheet as a resource to news media. Include interesting data as part of your organization e-mail signature during awareness events. Also, provide the fact sheet to your partners as a resource to distribute.

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# Goals and Guiding Principles



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**Matte Article:** This article has been developed as a stand-alone piece that highlights the connection between a health topic and the environment. Its messaging reach is designed to be broad and valuable for everyone from general consumers looking for information about a particular disease to health professionals who want to raise awareness among patients.

**Ideas for use:** *Submit this piece to community papers, provide it to organizations to publish in their newsletters, post it on your Web site, include a link to it on your Facebook wall, and share it via tweets. Distribute or make it available electronically to local schools, medical centers, nursing homes, and health care professionals. Provide this piece to decision makers and use local data when possible – it will inform them about the environment-health connection and how that can affect their constituents; they can also use it on their Web sites. You can also include it in newsletters and incorporate into your organization's mailings.*

**Social Media Examples:** This document contains example topics and sample copy for use on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. These posts/tweets were written with the goal of helping your organization engage in a dialogue with your many and varied audiences. Specific examples are provided that can be used to help communicate the value of the Tracking Network to health departments, health practitioners, decision makers and other interested organizations and individual persons.

**Ideas for use:** *Use posts on Facebook and tweets on Twitter. Share with partners who have social media outlets.*

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## Effective Communication: A Crucial Investment

As grantees and partners of the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network, your organization is an important voice that helps communicate the value of the Tracking Network, and ensures that it can grow and evolve to provide even better service into the future. By incorporating this message at every opportunity into your documents, policy briefings, community outreach, social networks, and media outreach, you serve as an influential resource that can provide critical information and translate the value of the Tracking Network to your different audiences. Together, we can educate people about the connection between health and the environment, encourage Tracking Network use, and help potential partners and champions recognize this tool as a crucial investment that saves lives, protects people and saves money through prevention. ■



Environmental Public Health Before and After Tracking:

# A Decade of Tracking



"When the Pew Commission report came out, everyone — the press, the public, Congress — couldn't believe that a tracking program didn't already exist."

Shelly Hearne, Dr. P.H.  
Founding Executive Director,  
Trust for America's Health (2000)

"CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is the most important accomplishment of the past decade."

Thomas A. Burke, Ph.D., M.P.H.  
Associate Dean for Public Health  
Practice and Training  
Professor, Department of Health  
Policy and Management  
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg  
School of Public Health (2010)



**After a decade of tracking** via a national environmental public health tracking program, our understanding of the connections between public health and the environment is vastly improved. CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program began 10 years ago with the idea that health and environmental problems are not always separate issues with unrelated solutions.

Though the program began in 2002, the actual online Environmental Public Health Tracking Network launched in 2009. This website is a valuable tool that is helping draw a clear picture of the intricate relationships between environment and health. And, as we move forward, the Tracking Network has the potential to empower more and more organizations to save lives and protect health.

**Before tracking**, even simple questions about health and the environment could take months to answer.

**With a tracking** network in place, public health officials can respond quickly, often within hours, to locate hazard sources or answer citizens' concerns.

**Before tracking**, collections of data were created and held by many different government departments within their separate department "silos."

**With tracking**, standards and tools to link these disparate sources of information now exist and can help answer important questions about the public's health.

**Before tracking**, environmental and health fields were often separated both physically and philosophically.

**With tracking**, these two worlds are brought together to benefit of all.

**Before tracking**, public health and environmental officials concentrated mainly on acute events such as hazardous chemical releases or point-source pollution, such as air pollution from a specific factory.

**With tracking** in place, officials can trace amounts and geographic spread of pollutants over time. This capability allows the officials to monitor long-term trends and place those acute events in context.

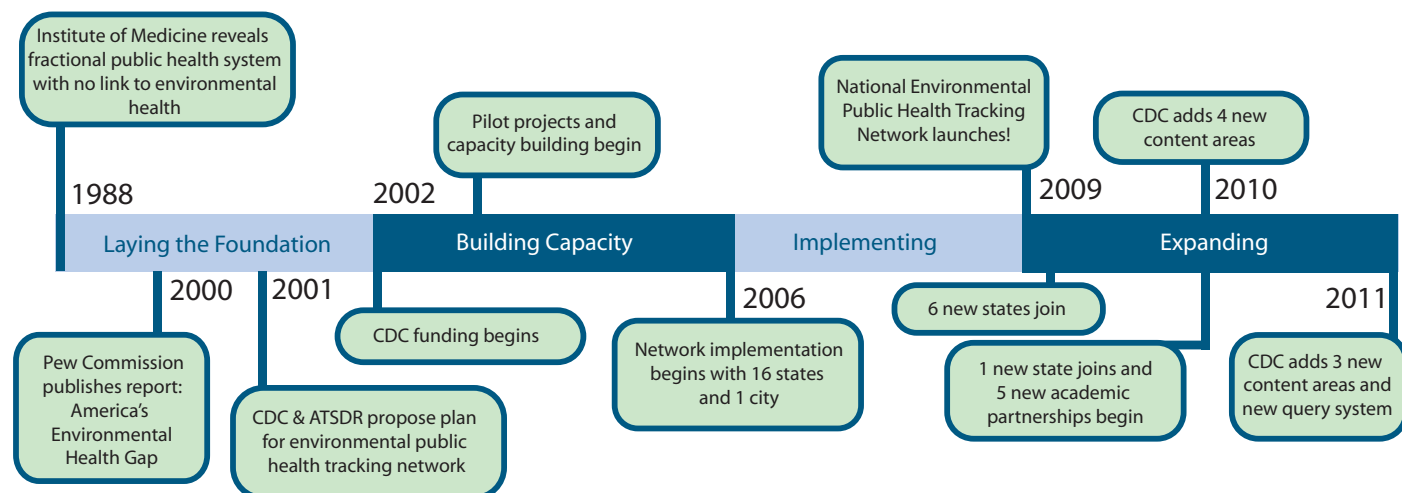
**Before tracking**, environmental health surveillance was more difficult than infectious disease surveillance, a traditional area of concern for CDC and state and local health departments.

**With tracking**, we can apply the same "disease detective" skills to finding environmental causes of illnesses and then take preventive measures to protect the public's health. ■



Environmental Public Health Tracking Network:

# A Timeline







CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Key Messages and Talking Points



The following key messages and talking points can help you and your spokespeople convey and emphasize the effect the Tracking Network can have.

## How to Use

The following key messages and talking points can help you and your spokespeople convey and emphasize the effect the Tracking Network can have on addressing the connections between the environment and carbon monoxide poisoning and the places where we live, work and play. These messages and talking points may be used as they have been written, or, they can be customized for your own purposes. We encourage you to use local-, regional-, or state-specific information whenever possible because it will further underscore the importance of this resource for your constituents. Each of the three key messages presented are supported by three to four additional talking points.

## Key Messages

- The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is a one-of-a-kind tool that brings together information that cannot be found, or is hard to find, anywhere else.
  - The Tracking Network is the best Internet resource connecting environmental and health information.
  - The Tracking Network is unique because it brings together and standardizes data that would be usually be kept by many different agencies, allowing us to see how our health and the environment are related.
  - The Tracking Network helps make sense of these data with tools such as maps that show where environmental and health problems are happening. This makes that valuable information more useful to people who need it, from scientists to decision-makers.
  - Policy makers, educators, and public health workers can protect people and save lives by using The Tracking Network to help make critical decisions about where to target environmental public health resources.
- The Tracking Network is helping us better understand when carbon monoxide (CO) poisonings happen.
  - Each year, about 450 people in the U.S. die from unintentional non-fire related CO poisoning and thousands more end up in the emergency room or being admitted to the hospital because they've been exposed to CO.
  - Improving our understanding of at-risk groups will help us do a better job of protecting Americans from CO poisoning.
  - This information can help public health officials plan how and where to best target prevention efforts and protective policies. For example, we can identify where to

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CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Key Messages and Talking Points



increase community outreach and public education about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning and how to avoid it.

- (INSERT ORGANIZATION) was able to put (INSERT ACTION, SAFEGUARD, ETC.) in place to help prevent carbon monoxide poisonings, which could save (INSERT LOCAL/ STATE NUMBERS) of lives in (INSERT CITY/STATE).
- Public officials need to understand who is at risk, who is being exposed, and where they are getting medical help
  - This is why CO poisoning is part of the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network
  - The Tracking Network track:
    - Hospital admissions due to CO poisoning
    - Emergency room visits related to CO poisoning
    - Deaths related to CO poisoning
- The Tracking Network Network boosts (INSERT ORGANIZATION) ability to save lives and protect the health of the people we serve.
  - The Tracking Network fills information gaps.
  - The Tracking Network helps us respond quickly to environmental public health issues.
  - Please help others use this important and valuable resource. Everyone who is looking for information about a health and environmental connection should and can use the Tracking Network at [www.cdc.gov/ephtracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking). ■



CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# The Facts



CO poisoning is the leading cause of non-drug poison related deaths in the United States.

## Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a gas that you cannot see or smell

and it can cause sudden illness and death. It is the leading cause of non-drug poison-related death in the United States.<sup>1</sup> CO is found in fumes from cars, portable generators, heating systems and more. Each year in the United States, about 450 people die from unintentional non-fire related CO poisoning, more than 21,000 visit the emergency room and more than 2,300 have to stay in the hospital.<sup>2</sup>

The National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is helping us understand the connection between CO poisoning and the places where we live, work and play. By tracking hospital stays, emergency room visits and deaths related to CO poisoning, the Tracking Network is helping public health officials understand who is at-risk, as well as where and how they are being exposed to CO. This information helps public health officials to better target prevention efforts and protective policies. [Free resources](#) for public education and mass media are available from CDC.

## About Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

- Breathing high levels of CO can cause severe illness or death in just minutes. CO poisoning happens because red blood cells pick up CO quicker than they pick up oxygen. If there is a lot of CO in the air, your body may replace oxygen in blood with CO. This blocks oxygen from getting into your body, which can damage tissues and cause death.<sup>3</sup>
- The most common symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, confusion and loss of consciousness. CO poisoning can be difficult to diagnose because the symptoms are a lot like those for other illnesses. People who are sleeping or intoxicated can die from CO poisoning before ever experiencing symptoms.<sup>3</sup>
- Most CO poisoning occurs in fall and winter months.
- All people are susceptible to CO poisoning. Certain people are more at-risk to its effects including unborn babies, infants, and people with chronic heart disease, anemia, or respiratory problems.<sup>3,4</sup>

1 [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5605a1.htm?s\\_cid=mm5605a1\\_e](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5605a1.htm?s_cid=mm5605a1_e)

2 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21570230>

3 <http://www.cdc.gov/co/faqs.htm>

4 <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/co-comp/>

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CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# The Facts



## What We Are Learning from the Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

- In order to understand how CO poisoning is connected to the places we live, work and play, the Tracking Network provides data from a variety of sources. These include hospital and emergency department databases and death certificate data.
- By viewing where and how carbon monoxide poisonings occur, public health officials can use the Tracking Network to determine the most affected areas and people that could most benefit from education, awareness and prevention efforts. It also helps us see national trends in CO related injuries and deaths.
- According to data in the Tracking Network, 1,171 individuals died from all causes of CO poisoning in the United States in 2007. This includes fire and non-fire related CO poisonings.

## Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Can Be Stopped

Carbon monoxide poisoning is preventable. There are several things you and your family can do to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning and ensure your safety.

- **DO** have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, or, coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.
- **DO** install a battery-powered CO detector in your home. As with smoke detectors, replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the alarm sounds, leave your home immediately and call 9-1-1.
- **DO** seek prompt medical attention if you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseous.
- **DO NOT** use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal burning device inside the home, basement, or garage or near a window.
- **DO NOT** run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.
- **DO NOT** burn anything in a stove or fireplace that is not vented or may be clogged.
- **DO NOT** use a gas cooking range or oven to heat your home.<sup>5</sup> ■



CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Matte Article



Carbon Monoxide, or CO, can cause sudden illness or death if inhaled.

## CO Poisoning: Tips for Staying Safe

**Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a gas that you cannot see or smell.**

It can cause sudden illness and death if inhaled. CO is found in fumes produced by oil, coal or gas-burning furnaces and appliances, stoves, and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood.

CO poisoning often occurs following power outages during emergencies such as hurricanes or winter storms. When the power goes out people sometimes use alternative sources of heating or cooking like portable generators and charcoal grills. These heating and cooking devices can cause CO to build up in a home and to poison the people inside.

CO poisoning also occurs when heating systems like gas- and oil-burning furnaces are not properly maintained or ventilated. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every year carbon monoxide poisoning is responsible for hundreds of deaths and nearly 20,000 injuries as people begin using their furnaces to combat colder temperatures and portable generators during power outages.

CO poisoning is deadly. At first you may have a headache, or feel dizzy or weak. You may also feel sick or be confused. Not everyone feels all of these. Some that do may think it's just the flu or a cold. If you feel these things while in your home, you should go outside right away and call 911.

## You Can Prevent Carbon Monoxide Exposure

**Do** have your heating system, water heater and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year.

**Do** install a battery-operated CO detector in your home and check or replace the battery when you change the time on your clocks each spring and fall. If the detector sounds leave your home immediately and call 911.

**Do** seek prompt medical attention if you suspect CO poisoning and are feeling dizzy, light-headed, or nauseous.

**Don't** use a generator, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window. Keep generators outside at least 20 feet from any window, door, or vent.

**Don't** run a car or truck inside a garage attached to your house, even if you leave the door open.

**Don't** burn anything in a stove or fireplace that isn't vented.

**Don't** heat your house with a gas oven.

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CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Matte Article



By using CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (Tracking Network) to look at CO poisoning data, public health officials can understand who is at-risk, as well as where and how they are exposed to CO. This information helps public health officials to better target prevention efforts and protective policies.

The Tracking Network is a tool that can help public health officials understand the relationships between some environmental and health problems. It does this by collecting and sharing data that would traditionally be kept separately by many government and public health agencies. For example, the data available for CO poisoning comes from three different sources. Bringing it all together helps us to discover the connections between our health and the environment.

You can learn more about the Environmental Public Health Tracking at [www.cdc.gov/ephtracking](http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking) and CO poisoning at [www.cdc.gov/co](http://www.cdc.gov/co). ■



CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Social Media Examples



These posts/tweets were written to help your organization “talk” with your many audiences.

## This document contains example topics for social media channels

such as Facebook and Twitter. These posts/tweets were written to help your organization “talk” with your many audiences. Specific examples are provided that can be used to help communicate the value of the Tracking Network to health departments, decision makers and other interested parties. Each post/tweet is organized under a goal of the Tracking Network; they can be used as they have been written, or, they can be customized for your own purposes with language and information that will best resonates with your constituents.

### Tips for Using Social Media:

- Social media is a powerful tool that can help you communicate with and engage your audience. If you do not already have social media tools in place, set up a Facebook page and Twitter account here:
  - [www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/); <http://twitter.com/>
- CDC’s Tracking Network has an active Facebook page and Twitter account. “Friends” can follow us and share relevant and interesting posts.
  - Facebook: like CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network
  - Twitter: follow @CDC\_EPHTracking
- Watch for general news articles about public health and the environment and share these articles on your Facebook wall and your Twitter account. For example, during fall and winter months when the risk of CO poisoning is higher, share or retweet news stories and add your own comments and tweets to the discussion. Use the provided tool kit materials, such as the fact sheet and key messages, to create new posts and tweets that underscore how effective the Tracking Network is and has been.
- Tips for Facebook:
  - When mentioning the Tracking Network, use @CDC National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network.
- Tips for Twitter:
  - Hashtags make your tweets searchable and allow them to become part of the broader conversation on a given topic. When posting CO poisoning-related material, use #COpoisoning. When mentioning the Tracking Network, use #CDCEPHT.
  - Help build the Tracking Network’s Twitter following by including @CDC\_EPHTracking in your #FF (Follow Friday) tweets. Follow Friday (#FF) is a hashtag used to help Twitter users find other compatible users through their friends’ recommendations.
  - Here’s an example of what a Follow Friday tweet looks like: #FF #Medical #Health @DMC\_Heals @HenryFordNews @ClevelandClinic @KHNews @kevinmd @DoctorsLounge @GoHealthDotCom @DrDavidHanscom @meyouhealth

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CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Social Media Examples



## Sample Posts/Tweets for Social Media

**Goal: Educate about the connection between carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and when people are at risk.**

Facebook	Twitter
Most carbon monoxide poisoning occurs during the fall and winter months. CDC's Tracking Network equips public health officials with information that helps you target your outreach to the right people in the right places: <b><a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking">www.cdc.gov/ephtracking</a></b>	Most CO poisoning occurs in fall & winter. CDC's Tracking Network equips pub health officials w/ info to help educate & prevent <b><a href="http://bit.ly/eZiMpa">http://bit.ly/eZiMpa</a></b>
Carbon monoxide poisoning can kill in minutes. CDC's Tracking Network helps public health officials know what populations are at-risk and where: <b><a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking">www.cdc.gov/ephtracking</a></b>	CDC's Tracking Network helps pub health officials know what populations are most at-risk for CO poisoning: <b><a href="http://bit.ly/eZiMpa">http://bit.ly/eZiMpa</a></b>
Public health professionals: The Tracking Network has information on hospital stays, emergency room visits and deaths related to carbon monoxide poisoning. Access this tool to help target your outreach: <b><a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking">www.cdc.gov/ephtracking</a></b>	#Publichealth pros: The Tracking Network hosts info on CO poisoning hospital stays & more. Use it to target your outreach <b><a href="http://bit.ly/eZiMpa">http://bit.ly/eZiMpa</a></b>
Facebook poll: Public health pros: What is the leading cause of carbon monoxide poisoning in your region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indoor grilling</li><li>• Cars running in unvented areas</li><li>• Home heating systems</li><li>• Indoor generator use</li></ul>	#Publichealth pros: What is the leading cause of CO poisoning in your region?
Public education is the key to preventing carbon monoxide poisoning. Every year, ~450 people die from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Learn to prevent: <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/kN1">http://go.usa.gov/kN1</a></b>	Pub education is key to preventing #COpoisoning. Learn to prevent: <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/kN1">http://go.usa.gov/kN1</a></b>





CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Social Media Examples



**Goal: Provide CO poisoning prevention tips.**

Facebook	Twitter
Carbon monoxide poisoning can be deadly! Use generators safely. Place them outside, 20 feet away. <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/kN1">http://go.usa.gov/kN1</a></b>	#COpoisoning can be deadly! Use generators safely. Place them outside, 20 feet away. <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/kN1">http://go.usa.gov/kN1</a></b>
Carbon monoxide poisoning often causes deaths after disasters. Replaced your CO detector battery lately? <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/Dtd">http://go.usa.gov/Dtd</a></b>	#COpoisoning causes deaths after disasters. Replaced your CO detector battery lately? <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/Dtd">http://go.usa.gov/Dtd</a></b>
Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning! Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home after a disaster. <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/Dtd">http://go.usa.gov/Dtd</a></b>	Prevent #COpoisoning! Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home after a disaster. <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/Dtd">http://go.usa.gov/Dtd</a></b>
Prevent CO poisoning! Never run gas-powered generators inside the home or near vents, windows or doors <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/Dtd">http://go.usa.gov/Dtd</a></b>	Prevent #COpoisoning! Never run gas-powered generators inside the home or near vents, windows or doors <b><a href="http://go.usa.gov/Dtd">http://go.usa.gov/Dtd</a></b>

**Goal: Raise awareness about the connection between public health and the environment via Tracking Network.**

Facebook	Twitter
Check out connections between health and the environment in your area: <b><a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking">www.cdc.gov/ephtracking</a></b>	Check out health/enviro info near you <b><a href="http://bit.ly/eZiMpa">http://bit.ly/eZiMpa</a></b>
Want to learn what environmental health issues are of most concern in your area? Use CDC's Tracking Network to find out: <b><a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ephtracking">www.cdc.gov/ephtracking</a></b>	Use the @CDC_EPHTracking Network to learn about issues near you <b><a href="http://bit.ly/eZiMpa">http://bit.ly/eZiMpa</a></b>



CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Success Stories



## The stories provided here highlight how the Tracking Network has

been used to improve public health. You can share these stories as examples of how the Tracking Network has been used for asthma and outdoor air pollution issues, as examples of how the network could be used to benefit your community, or as models for your own success story using network data. You can find more success stories on the Tracking Network in the Asthma and Outdoor Air sections.

### **Take a look at how Washington state used its tracking network to recognize carbon monoxide poisoning risk and create more effective policy.**

In Washington State, about 53 people go to the hospital for symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning every year. A study of a CO poisoning outbreak in King County, WA, during power outages in 2006, showed that 70% of people had been exposed to toxic levels of CO from generators or charcoal burners brought inside. In response to new state legislation, the Washington Building Code Council wrote draft rules in 2009 requiring the placement of CO alarms in homes. However, the draft rules applied only to homes with fuel-fired appliances or those with attached garages. As a result, many residents were still at a high risk for carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Washington tracking program worked with the Washington Department of Health and the Washington Building Code Council to provide data to decision makers for new CO detector rules in Washington. The data described both the burden of preventable deaths and sickness and risks for CO poisoning like the indoor use of generators. This information helped policy-makers recognize the need to extend the building code rules to more types of homes.

The Washington Building Code Council approved a measure to extend the CO detector rules to more types of homes. Other organizations used Washington Tracking Network data to help lobby the state legislature and create more awareness. The Washington Department of Health and Washington Tracking Network provided the facts and data needed to help craft the new rule's language requiring all residential buildings to have CO alarms by 2013. The new, stricter rules provide greater protection of the public's health.

### **Take a look at how New York State worked with its Tracking Network to identify groups at risk for carbon monoxide poisoning and launch a carbon monoxide poisoning awareness campaign.**

Many New Yorkers use portable generators when the power goes out. Generator use increases the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Little information was available about how many New York households use portable generators during power outages. Also, the number of households with properly installed and maintained CO alarms is unknown.

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CO Poisoning Can Be Stopped

# Success Stories



In order to close this knowledge gap, New York State's Tracking Program added questions about indoor generator use to the 2008 New York State Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System survey. The tracking program found that nearly 20% of state residents and more than 33% of residents living outside major cities had a portable generator. Despite the high number of indoor generator users, almost 30% of residents did not have a CO alarm in their homes.

Using tracking network data, the state department of health identified areas most at risk for CO poisoning. The state worked with local health departments and other partners to distribute generator safety and CO poisoning prevention materials to area residents. The New York Tracking Program will then track the success of the generator campaign and CO alarm law compliance.

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